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081612Z Feb 06

C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 000552

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/08/2021

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKISH MILITARY COURT CONVICTS RETIRED FOUR-STAR

REF: A. 05 ANKARA 2303

[1](#)B. ANKARA 407

Classified By: Political Military Counselor Timothy A. Betts, reasons 1  
.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) On February 6 a military court found former Turkish Navy Commander ADM (ret.) Ilhami Erdil guilty of corruption in the award of contracts to a company where his daughter was employed. His wife was acquitted of any wrongdoing, but his daughter was sentenced to six months in jail. The court sentenced Erdil to 2.5 years in jail (the minimum possible), stripped him of his rank, fined him 50 lira (less than \$40) and confiscated two apartments in Istanbul. Erdil failed to show how he legally acquired the funds to purchase the apartments. The loss of rank means Erdil will lose his pension, his access to military facilities (including medical facilities), his government housing (accorded all retired four-star officers) and his permit to carry a gun. The Turkish press speculates that Erdil will actually serve a year of his sentence, but papers across the political spectrum welcomed the court's decision as exemplary in the fight against corruption. A broad range of human rights contacts and attorneys with whom we spoke at a February 7 function echoed that sentiment.

[1](#)2. (C) Despite the minimum sentence, the conviction of a four-star officer for any offense is rare in Turkey. The personal approval of the chief of the Turkish General Staff (TGS) is required for the military prosecutor to even open a case. As we reported earlier (ref a), TGS Chief GEN Ozkok is generally credited with the current activism by military prosecutors against corruption within the military.

[1](#)3. (C) Comment: This high-profile conviction sends multiple messages. Rumors abound about irregularities in contracting and procurement by both civilian and military officials. This case is a clear warning to active duty military personnel that corruption carries a high risk. The case also serves as a call on the government to clean up its own house. Although the timing was probably coincidental, the public will note a contrast between a military actively policing itself and a government in which the Prime Minister long resisted declaring his assets and the Finance Minister continues to be hounded by allegations of corruption. Several contacts believe part of Ozkok's motivation is to weed out opponents within the military. Erdil was an ally of Ozkok's predecessor, GEN Huseyin Kivrikoglu, who tried unsuccessfully to block Ozkok's accession to TGS chief.

[1](#)4. (C) Comment (cont.): Several other senior (although not four-star) officers are under investigation currently, but how much further Ozkok's anti-corruption campaign will go is not clear. With only six months remaining in his tenure, he will not have many opportunities to approve new investigations. His heir apparent, Land Forces Commander GEN Ilker Buyukanit, is rumored to have received lavish gifts and may have a less-activist attitude on this issue. End Comment.  
WILSON